

Senator Fairbanks' Stirring Boyhood



BY ANSON T. HOLMES.

THE introduction into real life and history of Charles Warren Fairbanks, now senator from Indiana and prospective candidate of the Republican party for the vice presidential nomination, occurred when he was 3 years old, which was about fifty years ago.

His father had just erected a new house on his large 500-acre farm in Union county, Ohio, and the old building had been converted into a workshop and a general store house for provisions. While other members of the family were engaged in fitting up the new home, the boy was left in the old house, and his desire to help set him to work cleaning up. He procured a broom and began sweeping the shavings and rubbish into neat little piles, which he afterward threw on the logs in the old-fashioned stove fireplace, where a fire was briskly burning.

The little fellow was so intent on his work of "tredding up" that he did not notice that a burning shavings he had dragged from the fire had ignited one of the piles of rubbish. They dry wood caught in an instant, and the flame spread to other collections of shavings, until the room was in a blaze. The boy raised a cry and rushed for the door, which was closed. The hot flames by this time had caught larger material and were leaping up the walls and ceiling into the dry wood of the ceiling. The boy was too small to reach the heavy latch of the door, but, with an instinct and resource extraordinary in one of his age, he grabbed a board from a carpenter table, which he braced against the wall, and mounting it, raised the latch, pulled open the door and escaped in the nick of time.

When he got outside the burning house he grew frightened and ran to his mother with a white face, crying in a mournful voice: "Oh, mother, I've burnt up our house."

He had, indeed, and with it the entire winter's stock of food. His mother, dried apples and the bounteous family stores that thrifty farmers' wives in those days collected. But the loss was never thought of in the joy over the child's escape.

A Chore Boy at 6 Years of Age.

The pluck and strength with which Charles Fairbanks, at 3 years of age, extricated himself from dangerous surroundings were a fair indication of his sturdy country frame and mind. He was well adapted for the tasks which fall to the lot of little boys in the country, and by the time he was 6 years old he could ride across plowed fields and drop corn and pumpkin seeds, could drive the cows to pasture, feed the chickens, hunt the eggs, chop "kindlings" for the fire, and do all the light chores that are usually put off on the younger members of a farmer's family. The foundation of an education that has served to land him in the United States senate was laid at the district school, a short distance from his home.

When he was 10 years of age a tremendous event occurred in his life.

He was taken from the district school and sent for the winter to a higher institution in Woodstock, a nearby town. This enlarged the boy's vision of the world and was an important experience in his life. He was an earnest boy, but not dull and averse to fun. In fact, he extracted about as much enjoyment out of his boyhood existence as falls to the share of ordinary boys. He was ambitious, however, and went into the new school determined to make a good record, which he did. He felt grateful to his father for having shown so much consideration as to give him unusual educational advantages for a boy of his age, and he went back home determined to exhibit his gratitude by increased usefulness on the farm.

About this time his father promoted him from light chore work and gave him charge of two spirited young horses. Charles was an intense lover of animals especially horses, and he was proud to be entrusted with the management of a good team. He did some plowing and hauled about the farm and showed that he was capable of taking care of the horses.

Adventure With a Runaway Team.

One day there came a test of his capabilities as a driver. With a young horse broken, he had been sent to a neighboring town to deliver a large load of farm produce. For a considerable distance the road he had to travel ran parallel with a railroad track. On their return home a train overtook the boys in the big farm wagon. The young horses became frightened, reared, plunged and attempted to run away. Young Fairbanks handled the reins so skillfully that the frightened animals were kept on the road, although going at a terrific pace.

To make things worse, a chain in the rear of the wagon became loose and its clatter further terrified the horses. Other vehicles on the road were hastily pulled out of the way and their occupants gazed in horror, expecting to see Farmer Fairbanks' team and his young sons, perched up on a high seat, hurled to destruction. But Charles, with a courage and skill worthy of a Hank Monk, guided his steaming along the rough country road until they were safely stopped. The coolness exhibited by the future senator when a baby had this time saved his own life and the event in his boyhood which is most firmly fixed in the senator's mind, and which he recalls with the

greatest pleasure, was when his uncle presented him with a fine muzzle-loading rifle, which is still retained, and sometimes used by the distinguished statesman. Young Fairbanks was not yet 12 years old when this much coveted firearm was given him. It is a heavy rifle and was considerably of a load for a lad of his age. His muscles, however, were well developed by farm work and he soon acquired the knack of handling the gun with ease. He practiced constantly and became one of the best shots in the neighborhood.

When a boy Mr. Fairbanks developed an intense fondness for out-of-door sports, but none of them was more attractive than hunting with his rifle. He was a sure shot. Within the range of his gun, and his favorite recreation was hunting squirrels. He became so expert that he could "bark" a squirrel—that is, send a bullet, near the squirrel's head, that the little animal would be stunned by the shock and killed by the fall to the ground without the skin being broken.

Shortly after he came in possession of the rifle he met with an accident. While driving his father's cows home from pasture a stampede occurred, and he was thrown against a post, his arm and his arm broken. Even while carrying his arm in a sling he would not part company with his rifle, but managed with his sound hand to load and fire. He was a true farmer boy in the neighborhood none fancier shooting with his old muzzle-loading Kentucky rifle. The senator did not miss many of the pleasures of boyhood and he has not lost his keen zest for country sports, despite the fact that he has



been pictured as the embodiment of dignity. He was a good student, but a genuine boy. He did not care much for fishing, but the creeks and ponds near his old home afforded him delightful recreation in swimming and diving. Sometimes, as he sits in the senate during a long, dreary debate, a dreamy, reminiscent look will come into his eyes and a smile across his face as he thinks of a certain shady pool out in old Union county where he played "hooky" more than once for the sake of a cool dip.

One of these stolen joys he recalls with a smile. He and two or three of his schoolmates overstayed their noon hour enjoying themselves in the cool waters of the creek. When they finally arrived at the school house the tell-tale master upon their hair informed the boys that they had been brought out on the school house

floor and underwent a thorough, good old-fashioned flogging that was then the standard of school discipline.

Although owning an extensive farm, Senator Fairbanks' father was by no means a wealthy man, and Charles, being the oldest of the children, felt that it was his duty to contribute as much as possible to his own support as an education. At the age of 13 he went to Columbus to attend an academy, and while there resided with his uncle, who held a local public office. As Charles was anxious to pay his own way, his uncle procured him some clerical work, which assisted in meeting his expenses.

At 15 he attended a preparatory school for college and soon entered the Ohio Wesleyan university at Delaware, O. He did not exactly work his own way through college, but he contributed materially toward it. When he reached the university he was not the dignified, well poised person he now is, but is remembered as a long, lank strapping about sixteen feet tall, his appearance being extremely suggestive of

the rural districts. There was an appreciable hiatus between the bottom of his trousers and the tops of his shoes, but the young student was oblivious to the incongruity.

A neighbor had, equally ambitious for a college education, attended the university with Fairbanks, and the two boys conceived the idea that if they could join their forces it would make the burden easier for each of them. They rented a room in the town of Delaware and set up housekeeping for the term. Their parents contributed some furniture, and as often as they had opportunity sent them supplies and provisions. They got along economically.

To help meet his expenses young Fairbanks, who had learned how to use the tools of a carpenter on the farm, frequently secured jobs of carpentering and repairing. He says now that he would have made quite as good a carpenter as he has a lawyer, an elf he had stuck to the trade might have been a great contractor and builder by this time.

YOUNG FAIRBANKS HANDLED THE REINS SKILLFULLY.

HE GRABBED A BOARD FROM A CARPENTER TABLE.

"Fairbanks first attends to the business he is here for," was the remark of one of his college mates, "and if he has any spare time he goes in for pleasure and sports. That very well describes the life of the future senator while at college. During his course there he took no prizes for scholarships worthy of mention, but made and kept his averages and graduated with the respect of faculty and classmates.

There is no doubt that the tenderest memories of Senator Fairbanks' life cluster about the last two years of his college course. During that time he was editor of the college paper, and his assistant was Miss Cornelia Cole, daughter of Judge Cole of Marysville, Ohio, also a student at the Western university. Their association in college editorial work developed the romance which culminated in their marriage in 1872.

Entering on Life's Real Work.

When a lad Mr. Fairbanks developed a decided taste for the law, and in his collegiate course this taste was gratified, and he manifested abilities at mock trials in the college fraternities that in after years brought him fame and wealth. It was characteristic of him even in early life always to have some definite purpose in view. He never shouldered his rifle for an aimless stroll in the woods, but always with the idea of shooting game. To this day he does not care to start on a walk or a ride without a definite object or place in view. His whole course of life has been shaped on this policy.

Leaving college, he began his own living, but still with a definite idea of studying law, which he took in at the bar. He accepted the position of agent of the Associated Press at Pittsburgh, Pa., the appointment having been given him by his uncle, the late William Henry Smith, then at the head of this news gathering and distributing agency.

The senator often laughingly refers to his experience in news gathering in the Smoky City: "As I recollect, it is the most important of my duties was to report the state of the weather and the stage of water in the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers," he recently said.

He had plenty of time to devote to the study of law, which he took in with a prominent attorney in Pittsburgh, but when he sought admission to the bar he was refused because he had not been for three years a resident in the state, which was a requirement for admission. Thereupon he went to Cleveland, Ohio, and was admitted and shortly afterwards married and opened his first law office in the city of Indianapolis. This was in 1874.

The business and political career of the sturdy Ohioan was not untroubled. He was burned to death, worked on his father's farm, hunted squirrels and rabbits and was flogged for "goin' in swimmin'" in a public bath. He was interested in public characters. The success that has attended his policy of having a definite purpose in view augurs well for his success at the Republican convention in Chicago, one of those definite purposes is to secure the vice presidential nomination.

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CHANCE AND THE PRESIDENCY.

BY RUFUS ROCKWELL WILSON.

ACCIDENTS, favoring circumstances and unlooked-for events have done more to seat a majority of our presidents and to bar other aspirants than all the calculable influences and qualities. Hardly one of the great leaders of either of the great parties has been elected since the earlier days of the republic. Jackson, the elder Harrison and Grant excepted, none of the generally popular men has succeeded, and of those Harrison was the popularity of an idea, and Grant of a military hero. The history of nominating conventions and of elections shows, in fact, that a man who has won only a moderate degree of fame and then waited for some happy turn of fortune has had by far the best chance of success.

The first election of Jefferson was due to an unlooked-for combination of events. Under the constitution as it then was, the man who received the largest number of electoral votes was made president, and the man who received the next largest number, vice president. But Burr and Jefferson received an equal number of electoral votes, and there being no choice in the electoral college, the election was thrown into the house of representatives. The house was not able to make a choice for seven days, and would not have elected Jefferson had not an unexpected influence been brought to bear upon the contest. This was the authority and ability of Alexander Hamilton, the leader of the Federalists, who, regarding Burr as the greater of two evils, interposed at the eleventh hour in behalf of Jefferson. Even then Hamilton accomplished his purpose in an indirect way: the Federal representative from Vermont and the two from Maryland voted blank ballots, so that in the final ballot it appeared that ten states, a majority of those voting, had given Jefferson their ballots. It has been aptly said that Jefferson's election through the efforts of Hamilton, who personified all that is opposed in political history to one of the strangest tales that history has to tell.

Burr justly charged his defeat to Hamilton, and in due time the latter answered with his life for his part in the election. A less tragic sequel of the contest was the passage by congress of a constitutional amendment providing that the electors shall designate their ballots as for president and vice president, a change making impossible a repetition of the trouble of 1801.

Clay's First Losing Fight.

It was predetermined that Madison should succeed Jefferson, and that the former should, in turn, make way for Monroe; but John Quincy Adams was in some respects an accidental president. The approach of the election in 1824 found four candidates before the people—Adams, Jackson, Crawford and Clay. Jackson had a majority of the popular vote, but not of the electoral college, and he was elected again, went to the house, with Monroe made from the three candidates—Jackson, Adams and Crawford—who had received the most electoral votes. That Clay was barred from the contest, in the house was due to what seemed at the moment a trifling matter. The state legislature at that time selected the presidential electors for the states. By what Clay's friends termed downright dishonesty, the Louisiana legislature seized an opportunity during the absence of Clay's supporters from the body to vote for the presidential electors. 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